

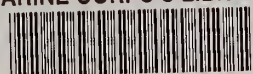
D

790

.G6

c.2

MARINE CORPS U LIBRARY



3000002543



D790
.G6
c.2

34321

J. C. DRECKINRIDGE LIBRARY

HEADQUARTERS U. S. MARINE CORPS
HISTORICAL DIVISION

RECEIVED SEP 1945 M.C.S.
EXEMPTED FROM
LAW
TO FILE NO.

MARINE CORPS AVIATION

IN WORLD WAR II

A Chronology

May 1945

NOTE: For additional copies of this chronology, write the Officer in Charge, Historical Division, or call Republic 7400, extension 7460.

MARINE CORPS AVIATION
IN WORLD WAR II

December 7, 1941 - December 7, 1944

A chronology of some of the outstanding events in
the first three years of the air war in the Pacific.

Prepared by Captain Warren H. Goodman, Historical
Division, U.S.M.C.

1912

May 22

Birthday of Marine Corps Aviation. First Lieutenant Alfred A. Cunningham, USMC, reported to the superintendent of the Naval Academy "for duty in connection with aviation." After two hours and forty minutes of flight instruction, Lieutenant Cunningham became the first Marine Corps pilot (he was Naval Aviator No. 5).

1941

December 7

Japanese planes attacked the Ewa Mooring Mast Field, Oahu, T.H. The attack came just a few minutes before the attack on the fleet at Pearl Harbor. Thirty-two Marine planes were destroyed on the ground and 15 others damaged. One Jap plane was shot down by a Marine manning the free gun in the rear cockpit of a parked dive bomber.

December 8

Enemy bombers attacked Wake Island, destroying seven Marine Wildcats on the ground. This left the Wake garrison with an "air force" of five F4F's, one of which was damaged.

In the States, the Chief of Naval Operations ordered the First Marine Aircraft Wing to proceed from Quantico to San Diego to furnish a reserve of carrier squadrons for the Pacific Fleet.

December 9

First plane shot down in this war by a Marine pilot. During an attack on Wake Island by enemy bombers, one of the defending F4F's shot down an enemy twin engine bomber.

December 11

First use of fighters as bombers, and first enemy warship sunk by aerial action in this war. A Japanese light cruiser was sunk off Wake Island by Marine Wildcats carrying 100-pound bombs and strafing with 50-caliber machine guns.

1941

December 12

An F4F from Wake Island sank an enemy submarine with two 100-pound bombs.

December 14

Twenty-seven Jap bombers attacking Wake Island were intercepted by three Marine fighters. Two of the enemy planes were shot down.

1942

March 10

Marine fighter planes from Midway intercepted and shot down a lone Jap four-engine seaplane.

March 19

Marine Aviation entered the South Pacific area for the first time. Marines arrived at Tutuila to take over the air defense of the Samoan area.

April 18

Marine fighter planes were based at Palmyra Island (Line Islands), for the first time.

April 22

A Navy scouting squadron was assigned to the operational control of the Marine Aircraft Group at Samoa. This was the first time in history that a Naval Aviation unit came under the command of a Marine unit.

May 10

Marine planes were based on New Caledonia for the first time.

June 3

Battle of Midway began. Patrol planes from Midway contacted enemy surface forces approaching the island.

June 4

All available aircraft at Midway were put into the air to attack enemy carriers and intercept enemy bombers approaching the island. Seventeen enemy planes were shot down by Marine fighter pilots flying Wildcats and obsolescent Brewster Buffalos. Hits on a Japanese aircraft carrier and battleship were scored by Marine dive bomber pilots flying Dauntlesses and obsolescent Vought Sikorsky Vindicators. Out of 53 Marine planes which took the air, 27 failed to return and many others were damaged.

1942

June 5

Marine dive bombers attacked a crippled enemy battleship retiring from Midway, scoring one direct hit and one close miss.

Captain Richard E. Fleming, who led the attack, continued his own dive despite severe damage to his plane. He dove to a low altitude before releasing his bomb and crashed in flames near the ship he had damaged. He was subsequently awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

June 8

Marine planes were based at Efate, New Hebrides, for the first time.

July 29

Marine planes were based on Espiritu Santos for the first time.

August 7

Brigadier General Ross E. Rowell assumed command of Marine Aircraft Wings, Pacific, with headquarters at Ewa.

August 20

Marine planes arrived at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal. Nineteen Wildcat fighters (F4F's) and 12 Dauntless dive bombers (SBD's) flew to Guadalcanal from the USS Long Island. Lieutenant Colonel C. L. Fike commanded the unit, which was the first to be based on Guadalcanal.

August 21

Marines made their first aerial contact in the Solomons. Six Zeros were intercepted by four Marine Wildcats. Major John L. Smith shot down one of the enemy planes.

August 22

Five Army Airacobra fighters arrived at Guadalcanal, and were assigned to the operational control of MAG-23.

At Ewa, the Fourth Marine Base Defense Aircraft Wing was organized, under the command of Colonel C. A. Larkin.

August 23

Available air strength at Guadalcanal was increased by the arrival of Navy planes from the USS Saratoga.

August 25

Last day of the Battle of the Eastern Solomons. Marine and Navy dive bombers from Henderson Field attacked enemy surface forces off Guadalcanal, damaging one enemy cruiser and two transports.

1942

September 1

Ewa Mooring Mast Field, headquarters of Marine Aviation in the Pacific, was redesignated Marine Corps Air Station, Ewa.

September 3

Brigadier General Roy S. Geiger arrived at Guadalcanal and assumed command of all Allied aircraft based there. The Marine plane which brought him was the first transport to land on Henderson Field.

September 7

A Marine transport plane made the first air evacuation of casualties from Guadalcanal.

September 14

The First Marine Aircraft Wing set up headquarters on Espiritu Santos, New Hebrides. This was the first overseas headquarters of a Marine Aircraft Wing.

First flight to Australia by a Marine transport plane.

September 22

First flight to New Zealand by a Marine transport plane.

October 2

Major R. E. Galer shot down two Jap fighters over Guadalcanal, bringing his total kills to 13. He was subsequently awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

October 10

Major John L. Smith shot down a float-type Zero over Guadalcanal, bringing his personal score to 19 and making him the highest-scoring ace of the war to date. He was subsequently awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

October 16

While circling to land at Guadalcanal after leading a long over-water ferry flight, Lieutenant Colonel H. W. Bauer sighted a squadron of Jap planes attacking one of our ships off shore. Although he was low on fuel, he attacked the enemy squadron alone and succeeded in shooting down four of them before he ran out of gas. He was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

October 19

Army transport planes began joint operations with Marine Aircraft Group

1942

25, thus laying the foundations for the joint transport service to be known as SCAT.

November 7

Brigadier General Louis E. Woods relieved Major General Geiger as Senior Naval Aviator on Guadalcanal.

November 10

The Third Marine Aircraft Wing was organized at Cherry Point, North Carolina.

November 13

Marine Avengers saw combat for the first time. The Japanese battle-ship Kongo received four torpedos in her side as souvenirs of the occasion.

November 24

ComAirSoPac ordered the creation of the South Pacific Combat Air Transport Command to be known by the short title of SCAT. Marine and Army transport squadrons, already operating jointly, formed the basis of the new organization. Headquarters were established at Tontouta (New Caledonia) and the services of this combat airline reached Sydney, Auckland, Efate, Espiritu Santos, and Guadalcanal.

December 24

ComAirSoPac ordered a PBY to proceed to Tulagi "to operate primarily as a rescue plane," and assigned it the voice radio call: "Dumbo." This was the first rescue service in the South Pacific, and the radio call used later became the nickname for any rescue plane.

December 26

Brigadier General F. P. Mulcahy and part of his Second Marine Aircraft Wing staff arrived at Guadalcanal, and General Mulcahy relieved Brigadier General Woods of the command of all Allied aircraft based on Henderson Field.

1943

January 15

Captain Joseph J. Foss shot down three enemy planes over Guadalcanal, bringing his personal score to 26. This tied Captain Eddie Rickenbacker's World War I record and set a record for this war which was unsurpassed for over a year. Captain Foss was subsequently awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.



1943

January 26

A Marine reconnaissance plane from Guadalcanal attempted to photograph the Japanese stronghold of Truk. The mission failed because of unfavorable weather, but pictures of other enemy positions in the Caroline Islands were secured.

Second Marine Aircraft Wing headquarters were set up at Efate.

February 13

The Corsair saw combat for the first time when a Marine fighter squadron escorted a B-24 formation attacking enemy shipping in the south Bougainville area.

February 16

Rear Admiral C. P. Mason relieved General Mulcahy as Senior Naval Aviator on Guadalcanal and assumed the title of Commander, Aircraft, Solomons. General Mulcahy was appointed Chief of Staff of ComAirSols.

February 20

Fighter planes based on Guadalcanal provided aerial cover for ground troops occupying the Russell Islands. A four-plane dawn to dusk fighter umbrella over the island was initiated.

February 25

Marine dive bombers attacking Vila Airfield (on Kolombangara Island) used thousand-pound "daisy cutter" bombs for the first time in the South Pacific.

March 13

Advance Marine Aviation units landed on the Russell Islands.

March 17

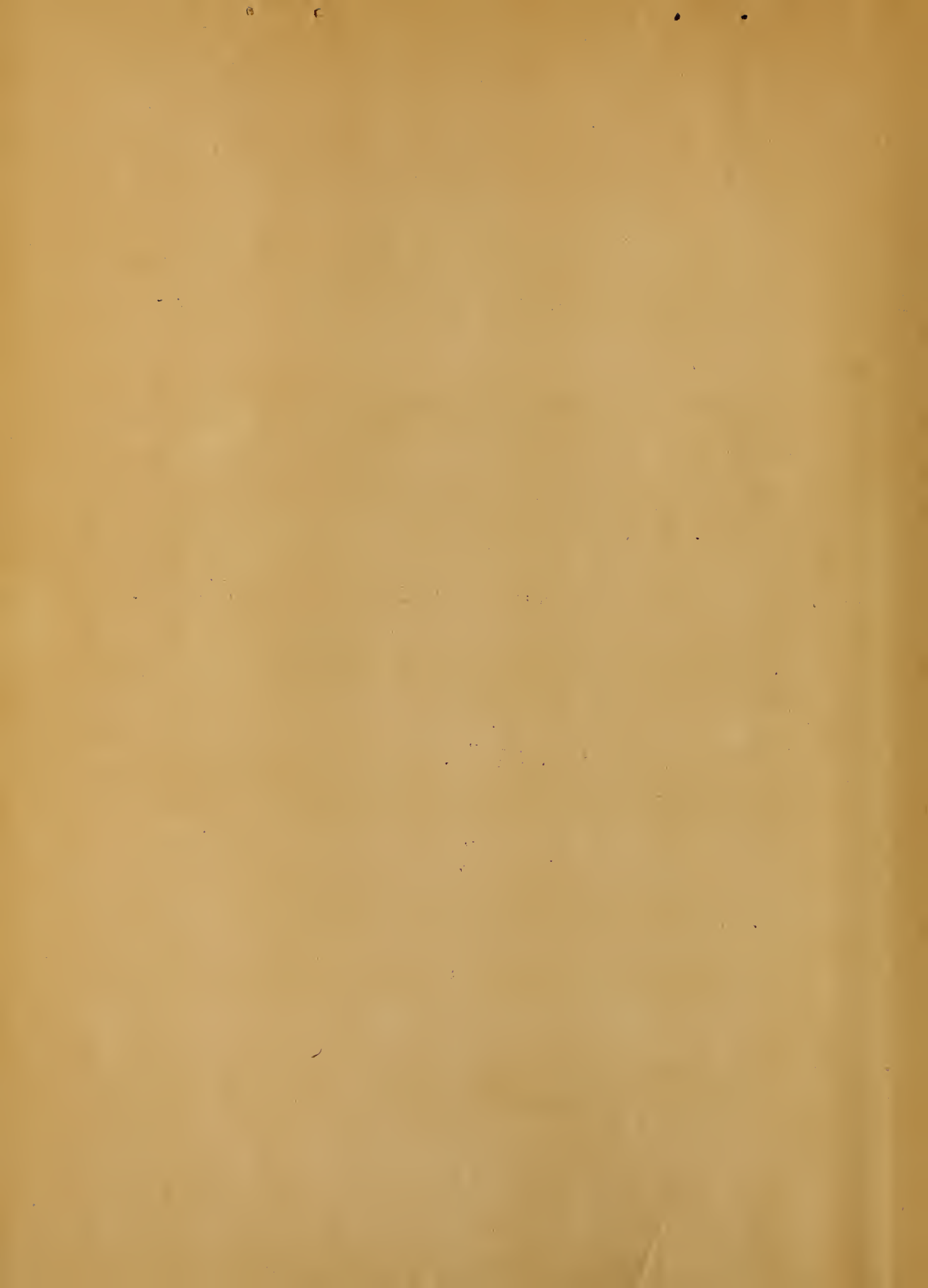
Marine planes were based on Johnston Island for the first time.

March 20

First aerial mine-laying mission in the South Pacific. Forty-two Avengers mined the waters off south Bougainville in a dangerous night mission.

March 30

Colonel C. C. Jerome became Acting Director of Aviation, Marine Corps, when Major General R. J. Mitchell was detached from overseas duty.



1943

March 31

The end of the quietest month in the South Pacific air war. Only eight enemy planes were shot down by fighters based on Guadalcanal, and no Allied fighters were lost during the month.

April 1

Allied fighters from Guadalcanal intercepted two enemy air attacks on the Russell Islands, shooting down 20 Jap planes with the loss of only six of our fighters.

April 7

Allied fighters from Guadalcanal intercepted 160 enemy planes attacking our shipping and shot down 38 of them. Only five of our planes were lost, and four of the pilots were saved.

First Lieutenant J. E. Swett led four Marine fighters in an attack on 15 enemy dive bombers, personally shooting down seven of them. He was subsequently awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

April 13

The first plane landed on the new airstrip on the Russell Islands.

April 22

Second Marine Aircraft Wing headquarters moved from Efate to Auckland, New Zealand.

May 12

U. S. Naval and Marine Corps Air Center, Auckland (New Zealand), was established under the command of Colonel W. O. Brice.

May 13

Major General Roy S. Geiger became Director of Aviation, Marine Corps.

May 30

Marine planes arrived at Funafuti (Ellice Islands) for the first time.

June 16

One hundred Japanese planes attacked our shipping near Guadalcanal. They were intercepted by our fighters and 81 of the enemy planes were shot down. We lost six planes in the action.

June 30

General Mulcahy and personnel of the forward echelon, Second Marine Aircraft Wing, landed with assault troops on Rendova Island and set up

1943

operations as ComAirNewGeorgia. Fighters from Guadalcanal maintained a 32-plane umbrella over the landing force and shot down 101 enemy planes during the day.

July 4

A formation of 18 Jap bombers attacked our ground positions on Rendova. All but one were shot down by antiaircraft fire and our fighter cover.

July 21

ComAirSols planes flew 132 sorties (in six separate attacks) against enemy strong points in the Bairoko Harbor area of New Georgia which were holding up the advance of Marine and Army ground troops.

July 24

Segi Airfield (on eastern New Georgia) opened for operation and 24 fighter planes were transferred there.

August 5

Munda Airfield (on New Georgia) was captured by Allied ground troops.

August 14

Munda Airfield opened for operations. Two Marine fighter squadrons arrived, and General Mulcahy moved the headquarters of ComAirNewGeorgia from Rendova to Munda.

August 15

ComAirNewGeorgia fighter planes furnished air cover for Allied ground troops landing on Vella Lavella. Two enemy air attacks were repulsed during the day and 29 enemy planes were destroyed. Two of our planes were lost but the pilot of one of them was recovered.

August 22

Two Marine Avenger squadrons bombed enemy positions on Vella Lavella in support of our ground troops.

August 30

First Lieutenant Kenneth A. Walsh made a lone-wolf attack on 50 enemy fighters over Kahili, shooting down four of them before being forced down himself. He was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

September 1

Marine Air, Hawaiian Area, organized as a separate command under



1943

MarAirWingsPac.

September 23

First plane landed on newly constructed Barakoma Airfield, Vella Lavella.

October 12

Brigadier General Louis E. Woods became Director of Aviation, Marine Corps.

October 17

ComAirNewGeorgia planes began regular operations from Barakoma Airfield.

October 19

Marine fighter planes arrived at Nanomea (Ellice Islands) for the first time.

October 20

ComAirSols headquarters moved from Guadalcanal to Munda and absorbed the duties of ComAirNewGeorgia. After 14 months of operations, Henderson Field became a "rear base."

October 27

Personnel of the forward echelon, First Marine Aircraft Wing, landed with New Zealand and Marine ground forces on the Treasury Islands. Marine Avengers acted as spotter planes for destroyers furnishing fire support for the landing while Marine and other Allied fighter planes flew protective cover for the operation.

Army, Navy and New Zealand fighter planes began operations from Ondonga Airfield (New Georgia). Colonel W. O. Brice, USMC, commanded the Marine ground units and Air Command, Ondonga.

October 30

Marine planes bombed and strafed Japanese positions at Sangigai Village in support of a Marine parachute battalion operating on Choiseul Island.

November 1

Marine Avengers bombed and strafed the beaches on Cape Torokina, Bougainville, in support of the landing of the Third Marine Division. This was the first all-Marine air support of a Marine landing in this war. Brigadier General Field Harris and personnel of the forward echelon, First Marine Aircraft Wing, landed with the ground troops and set up headquarters as ComAirNorSols.



1943

November 7

Second Marine Aircraft Wing headquarters returned to Efate from Auckland.

November 11

Fourth Marine Base Defense Aircraft Wing headquarters moved to Funafuti.

November 13

First kill by a Marine night fighter. One enemy bomber was shot down by a Marine night fighter off the Bougainville coast.

November 15

CENCATS (Central Pacific Combat Air Transport Service) was established with headquarters at Tutuila (Samoa) and substations at Upolu, Wallis, Funafuti, Nukufetau, and Nanomea.

November 20

Major General Ralph J. Mitchell assumed duties as Commander, Aircraft, Solomons, relieving Army Major General N. F. Twining.

November 24

A Marine Dauntless on an artillery spotter mission over Bougainville made an emergency landing on the almost-completed Torokina Airfield, thus becoming the first Allied plane to land on Bougainville.

November 25

Navy fighter planes made the first landing on Tarawa.

November 29

CENCATS made the first transport flight to Tarawa and evacuated battle casualties.

December 15

CENCATS made the first scheduled transport flight into Apamama and opened a freight and passenger office there.

December 16

CENCATS made the first scheduled transport flight into Makin and opened a freight and passenger office there.

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1875

1943

December 17

ComAirSols fighters made the first fighter sweep on Rabaul from the Solomons.

1944

January 3

Major Gregory Boyington shot down one enemy plane over Rabaul to bring his total score to 26, tying Major Foss' record score. Major Boyington did not return from this mission. For his inspiring leadership and combat achievements, he was later awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor.

January 7

Marine and Navy single-engine bombers (SBD's and TBF's) from the Solomons attacked Rabaul for the first time.

January 25

ComAirSols headquarters were moved from Munda to Bougainville.

January 30

First Lieutenant Robert M. Hanson shot down four enemy planes over Rabaul. This brought his total to 25 (11 of which were shot down in one week). Lieutenant Hanson, who crashed in a strafing dive four days later, has been awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor.

February 1

Marine Aircraft, South Pacific, was organized to act as an intermediate echelon between higher commands and the two Marine Aircraft Wings in the South Pacific area. Major General R. J. Mitchell assumed command.

February 4

Marine planes made a photographic reconnaissance of Truk, the strongest Japanese base in the Pacific. The pictures they took yielded information which led to the first carrier raids on that base less than two weeks later.

February 15

ComAirSols fighters covering the Allied landing on Green Island intercepted Jap dive bombers attacking the convoy, and shot down eight of them. Brigadier General Field Harris and personnel of the forward echelon, First Marine Aircraft Wing, landed and set up headquarters of ComAirGreen.

1944

February 17

Marine Avengers used airborne forward firing rockets for the first time in an attack on Japanese ships in Rabaul Harbor.

February 19

Final collapse of Japanese air power in the South Pacific Area. ComAirSols planes attacking Rabaul were intercepted by 50 enemy fighters, 24 of which were promptly shot down. It is believed that all remaining Jap planes were evacuated from the Rabaul area that night, because the Japs never again put fighters in the air to challenge Allied planes in the South Pacific area.

March 4

Marine fighter and dive-bomber squadrons began to fly daily missions against the remaining Japanese-held islands in the Marshalls to destroy all guns, buildings, and other installations above the ground.

March 6

Lagoon Field, the fighter strip on Green Island, was officially opened.

March 9

Bombers attacked Rabaul without fighter escort for the first time. The Fourth Marine Base Defense Aircraft Wing moved its headquarters to the Marshalls.

March 14

The First Marine Aircraft Wing moved its headquarters from Espiritu Santos to Guadalcanal to keep pace with the advance in the South Pacific.

March 15

Marine medium bombers (PBJ's) made their combat debut in an attack upon Jap positions in the Rabaul area.

Major General Mitchell was relieved as ComAirSols by Army Major General H. R. Harmon.

March 18

First use of Corsairs as fighter bombers. Eight Marine F4U's attacked Mille Atoll (in the Marshalls) with 1000-pound bombs.

March 20

Marine ground troops landed on Emirau Island. Colonel W. J. McKittrick and personnel of the forward echelon, First Marine Aircraft Wing, landed and set up headquarters of ComAirEmirau.

1944

March 23

CENCATS (Central Pacific Combat Air Transport Service) was re-organized under the name of TAG (Transport Air Group).

March 24

Army Liberators returning from a mission to Truk made the first landings on Ocean Field, the bomber strip on Green Island.

April 1

The Ninth Marine Aircraft Wing was organized at Cherry Point, under the command of Colonel C. F. Schilt.

April 14

First successful night interception in the Central Pacific.
Marine Corsair night fighters shot down two enemy bombers over Eniwetok.
First plane landed on Emirau Airfield.

April 20

Brigadier General Field Harris became ComAirSols, relieving Army Major General H. R. Harmon.

April 22

Marine Corsairs set a new endurance record for F4U's on combat missions. A three-plane flight covering the landing on Ujelang Atoll (in the Marshalls) was airborne for 9 hours and 40 minutes.

May 8

The Third Marine Aircraft Wing opened headquarters at Ewa and assumed direction of all Marine aviation activities in the Hawaiian area. Marine Air, Hawaiian Area, was disbanded.

May 31

Major General J. T. Moore relieved Brigadier General Field Harris as ComAirSols.

June 8

First Marine Aircraft Wing headquarters were moved forward from Guadalcanal to Bougainville.

June 15

The South Pacific area was disbanded as a separate command and control over that area was assumed by the Commander, Southwest Pacific

1944

Area. ComAirSols went out of existence and was replaced by a new, but similar, command known as ComAirNorSols, under Major General R. J. Mitchell.

June 17

First planes landed on Saipan. Marine artillery spotter planes were launched from an escort carrier and landed on the island three days after the initial landing by ground troops.

Marine Air Defense Detachment, Forward Area, Central Pacific, under the command of Colonel W. L. McKittrick, set up headquarters at Charan-Kanoa on Saipan.

June 24

First air evacuation of wounded from Saipan by Marine transport planes attached to TAG.

July 3

The Second Marine Aircraft Wing moved from Efate to Espiritu Santos to prepare for a further move forward.

July 27

Brigadier General Field Harris became Director of Aviation, Marine Corps.

July 28

Marine artillery spotter planes from Saipan became the first planes to land on Tinian, four days after the ground troops landed.

July 30

A Navy Avenger made a trial landing on Orote Field, Guam. Sniper fire forced it to take off again almost immediately.

SCAT moved its headquarters from Tontouta, New Caledonia, to Bougainville.

July 31

Marine Aircraft, South Pacific, was disbanded.

September 15

Ground crews of Marine squadrons landed with First Marine Division troops on Peleliu. Six men attached to aviation units were killed and 11 wounded while aiding the ground troops as stretcher bearers, grenade throwers, and riflemen.

1944

September 17

Major General F. P. Mulcahy assumed command of Aircraft, FMF, Pacific, relieving Major General R. E. Rowell.

September 18

Marine artillery spotter planes landed on a 500-foot "airfield" on Peleliu built in two days by the ground echelon of the squadron.

September 24

Pelolliu Airfield opened for operations and Marine night fighters arrived for duty. Major General J. T. Moore arrived aboard a Marine transport plane and set up headquarters as Commander, Garrison Air Force, Western Carolines.

September 28

Marine Corsairs from Pelolliu bombed and strafed the beach on Ngesebus Island in support of a landing by Marine ground forces.

October 4

First air evacuation of casualties from Pelolliu by Marine Commando planes.

October 9

TAG moved forward from the Marshalls to the Marianas area. ATG (Air Transport Group) was organized to take over the local transport runs in the Marshalls-Gilberts area.

October 12

Bolly tank fire bombs were used for the first time by Marine Corsairs attacking Jap positions in the hills behind Pelolliu Airfield.

October 16

Marine Corsairs attacked the Jap airfield on Babelthup Island (in the Palaus) and found a sign on the runway in letters ten feet high: "WELCOME YANKEE."

October 29

Marine planes were based on Ulithi Atoll (Western Carolines) for the first time. Ulithi was within fighter range of Guam, the furthest advanced air base in the Central Pacific. It was also within range of Peleliu, the furthest point of advance of Allied South Pacific forces. The completion of the Marine Air Base at Ulithi therefore completed a circle of air bases more than 1000 miles in diameter--with Truk and other Japanese Caroline Islands bases in the center of the ring.

1944

November 10

Marine Corsairs and Avengers based on Peleliu furnished air support for the recapture of Ngoregong Island, which the enemy had retaken the previous day.

November 11

Name of Fourth Marine Base Defense Aircraft Wing was changed to Fourth Marine Aircraft Wing.

November 20

Marine Corsairs furnished air cover for landings on Pula Anna and Sensorol Islands in the Western Carolines.

December 3

Marine planes arrived in the Philippines for the first time. A squadron of Marine Hellcat night fighters landed at Tacloban Airfield, Leyte.

December 7

Marine Aviation entered the fourth year of war against Japan. In three years, it had grown considerably:

in December 1941

there was only one Marine Aircraft Group (consisting of four squadrons) in the Pacific.

the personnel of Marine Aviation overseas numbered slightly more than 900.

Marine planes were operating from:
Ewa, and
Wake Island.

in December 1944

there were four Marine Aircraft Wings (containing 16 groups) in the Pacific.

the officers and men in Marine Aviation overseas numbered more than 39,000.

Marine planes were based at:
Ewa,
Midway,
Majuro,
Kwajalein,
Eniwotok,
Espiritu Santos,
Guadalcanal,
Bougainville,
Green Island,
Emirau Island,
Admiralty Islands,
Saipan,
Guam,
Ulithi,
Peleliu,
Leyte, and
a number of aircraft carriers.



343 21

GOODMAN

27 APR 1923

DEC 1983

MCS FORM S070/4 FPP 15387 (B)
LIBRARY BOOK ISSUE SLIP

DATE DUE

ISSUED TO

FEB 10 2004

DEMCO
PAMPHLET BINDER
Red, Demco

